



**PRAYER SUPPORT** – Jim Futral (standing), executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, assures state lawmakers during the Legislative Prayer Breakfast on Jan. 9 that Mississippi Baptists will be praying for them as they open the 2013 session of the Mississippi Legislature. The annual event is sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission through the Mississippi Cooperative Program. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

## Legislators hear of support, prayers from Miss. Baptists

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

Mississippi lawmakers gathered Jan. 9 at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson for a time of spiritual reflection, prayer, and breakfast shortly after the 2013 session of the Mississippi Legislature was gavelled to order at the New Capital across the street.

The annual event is sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) through the Mississippi Cooperative Program, said CAC executive director Jimmy Porter.

"We simply want our Mississippi legislators to know that we will be praying for them as they make decisions during the session that will affect all of us and the quality of life we have in Mississippi," Porter said.

"We do not discuss specific legislation during the breakfast, and we do not pressure them on bills that may come before them. It is a quiet time to pray with them, and let them know we will be praying for them during the session and throughout the year. Their duties as lawmakers don't end when the session ends," Porter said.

The prayer breakfast has become an annual fixture on legislators' calendars. "All legislators and elected state officials are welcome regardless of political or religious affiliations," said Porter, who estimated that Mississippi Baptists traditionally make up 25% or more of the legislature's composition.

The speaker at this year's breakfast was Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, which is across the street from the New Capital in downtown Jackson that will be the legislators' home away from home for the next three months.

Bluegrass Appeal, a group of mostly Mississippi Baptist musicians who band together to perform at churches and events such as the Legislative Prayer Breakfast, provided the musical interlude. Jess H. Dickinson, a presiding justice on the Mississippi



**BLUEGRASS APPEAL** – Jess H. Dickinson (left), presiding justice on the Mississippi Supreme court, leads the musical group Bluegrass Appeal on the hammered dulcimer at the annual Legislative Prayer Breakfast held Jan. 9 at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. Joining Dickinson were (from left) brothers Joe Thornton of Magee and Steve Thornton of Madison, and Jackson Carter of Oxford. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Supreme Court and member of First Church, Jackson/Madison Campus, led the band on the hammered dulcimer. Brothers Joe and Steve Thornton performed with Dickinson, along with Jackson Carter of Oxford.

Steve Thornton is also a member of First Church, Jackson/Madison Campus.

"We want our legislators and state officials to know that we are available to talk with them any time about spiritual issues and other things that may be affecting their lives. It is a personal and family sacrifice for legislators to be in Jackson when they have so many responsibilities at home, and we want to support them in that regard however we can," Porter said.

The Mississippi Baptist Christian Action

see PRAYER on p. 7

## Kendrick brothers stepping away from hit movie careers

**ALBANY, Ga. (BP and local reports)** – For almost a decade, Alex and Stephen Kendrick have wooed theatergoers with faith-based films that garnered the attention of Hollywood and were viewed by audiences around the world.

The string of hits kept their fans thirsting for more, beginning with *Flywheel: The Movie* in 2003, and progressing to *Facing the Giants* in 2006, *Fireproof* in 2008, and *Courageous* in 2011.

Rarely resting between the release of one hit and the writing and filming of the next, the brothers have decided to break with tradition and step away from filmmaking for a season.

Their next venture? A book. *Love Dare for Parents*, a spinoff from the popular *Love Dare* from the *Fireproof* movie, will be "a 40-day journey of dares to help parents communicate Christ's love to their children," Stephen Kendrick explained. "We want to help parents win the hearts of their children so they can win their ears."

Ever since the original book, which focused on strengthening marriages, was featured in *Fireproof*, parents have requested a similar book to help them influence their children for Christ. B&H Publishing, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources, expects to release it this summer.

"It's not easy to make a movie, but for us it's much easier to work with film than with print," Stephen Kendrick said. "Writing a book is like writing 15 term papers, one after the other. It's tedious, grueling work."

Each of their movies was accompanied by a novel, but those were co-written with professional authors. All of the books eventually made it onto a New York Times bestseller list. The brothers also wrote three books from scratch – *The Love Dare*; *The Love Dare Day by Day* devotionals for couples; and *The Resolution for Men*.

What comes next for the duo remains unknown. What is known is that they want to take time to follow God's direction before assuming there will be another movie.

"We have not taken it for granted that we'll always be making movies. We always go back to square one and seek the Lord's direction before proceeding," Alex Kendrick said. "Making a movie takes a year or two out of your life, time away from your family and friends; why would we want to do that if the Lord isn't in it?"

His younger brother readily agrees. "Movies don't want to be made," Stephen Kendrick said. "They take years of planning, writing, shooting. ... There are so many potential problems to stop the production timeline. It's like walking through a minefield with cast problems, budgeting problems, script problems, marketing, and distribution problems."

However, the rewards are immense. *Fireproof* was released on DVD in 75 countries and *Courageous* in 76 countries. In March 2012 nearly 1,000 police officers accepted Christ in a South American nation after watching the movie.

"You get these reports from all around the world and say to yourself, 'Is this for real?' That's when you know it's worth all the blood, sweat and tears," Stephen Kendrick said.

### Inside this issue

Directions	4
Sunday School lessons	
Editorial	
Bibliocipher	
How to Become a Christian	
Revivals & Homecoming	
Just for the R	
Classifieds	

JAN 30 2013





## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Dear Legislator ...

**T**he 2013 session of the Mississippi Legislature is revving up to full speed, as proposed legislation moves to committees and will soon be coming up on a series of deadlines.

As anyone knows who even casually tracks the annual three-month sessions of the Legislature, many bills are introduced but relatively few make it into law. The complex set of checks and balances both inside the legislative process and in the broader branches of state government have a tendency to winnow the hundreds and hundreds of bills that are filed and pre-filed for each session.

Legislators have to absorb their share of criticism, cynicism, and caricature during their time under the hoary domes of the New Capitol in downtown Jackson. Some of the ridicule showered on them is likely deserved by some of them, anyway, but a fair amount is not deserved.

They are, after all, our fellow Mississippians. For every citizen who couldn't find their way to either chamber in the Capitol but feels free to regularly slam legislators, there are at least a few of us who realize that most legislators are well-meaning people who must put aside their families, businesses, and community activities for one-quarter of each year to come to Jackson for the session.

That's no small sacrifice, so it would behoove us to occasionally tell them how much we appreciate the effort even as we loudly complain about what we perceive they are doing or not doing.

The Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) has some helpful hints on how to make contact with legislators, how to get a point across without dooming favored legislation, and how to follow up on the progress of important measures:

■ The best communicating is done face-to-face. Make an appointment and be on time. Bring an outline of the one or two main issues you want to discuss. Be brief, recommend specific solutions, and leave a written summary of your important points.

It's fair to ask the legislator for his/her position on the bills in which you are interested. Don't take it personally if the legislator disagrees. Rather than argue,

discuss differences in a pleasant manner.

■ If a personal visit is not possible, write your legislator. Writing can save a legislator's time (a plus in your favor) and provides a record of your position on proposed legislation. Include your full name, address, and telephone number. The address for legislators while in session is P.O. Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215-1018. Individual e-mail addresses can be accessed at [www.ls.state.ms.us](http://www.ls.state.ms.us).

■ Do your research. Know the bills about which you are writing, and include any specific information you have such as the bill number and details. Bill status can be obtained by calling (601) 359-3719 while the legislature is in session, or by going to [www.ls.state.ms.us](http://www.ls.state.ms.us).

■ Telephone calls do not substitute for personal visits and letters. When telephoning legislators, however, make efficient use of your time with them. Identify yourself and the bills you are for or against (again, one or two main issues is a good limit). Explain your reasoning and let them know how you want them to vote.

The telephone number for legislators while they are in session is (601) 359-3770. Just as with personal visits and letters, end the conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

■ Citizens can request to testify before committees about bills they strongly support or oppose. Find out the name of the appropriate committee chairman and contact him/her as soon as possible. If given the opportunity to testify, get to the point quickly and be prepared to answer any questions legislators may have about your position.

The CAC, a ministry funded by the Mississippi Cooperative Program, stands ready to assist Mississippi Baptists who want to get involved in this grand process of self-governance we enjoy in our state and nation. They can be reached at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. Fax: (601) 292-3350. E-mail: [rmccollum@christianaction.com](mailto:rmccollum@christianaction.com).

Take the time to get involved, or else just be content with whatever comes out of the legislative pipeline. Those are really our only two choices.

## Abortion: a settled issue?

**O**n Jan. 22, our nation reached the 40th anniversary of the horrific *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion-on-demand. For 40 years our nation has sanctioned the killing of more than one million unborn children every year, resulting in more than 55 million abortions with no end in sight.

This is a tragic milestone that should cause us to repent and weep. These unborn children are the most vulnerable human beings among us, yet they are afforded no protection by society. They are deemed the property of their mothers, with no rights except what their mothers choose for them.

At the moment of conception, a human being comes into existence. This is a person created in the image of God, possessing a soul and deeply loved by God. We are well beyond the days when anyone can claim ignorance of the individual personhood of the unborn. Unborn babies have their own circulatory systems, oftentimes with a blood type different from their mother's.

Within months of their conception, they are even making personal decisions. Unborn children move in the womb to get more comfortable and in response to pain.

Given the opportunity, these unborn people could join us in this world, live lives filled with meaning and purpose, and come to know the God who created them. Psalm 139 reminds us of God's involvement with the unborn. The psalmist declares, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Yet every year in our country more than a million of these lives of promise are mercilessly killed.

There are those, even in the Christian community, who believe that the abortion issue is a settled issue and that we ought to just accept it as a national practice and move onto things that aren't as divisive. We must never allow ourselves to accept abortion-on-demand as the new normal.

Abortions kill innocent unborn people, wreak havoc on the women who have them, desensitize our culture to the value of human life, and subject our nation to the judgment of God.

At the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, I hope you will join me in prayer for the unborn, the mothers and fathers who suffer through the effects of abor-



**Guest opinion**  
with Barrett Duke

tion, and our nation. God wants us to respect all human life as sacred. He will lead us to end this horrific practice if we will let Him.

I hope you will also help save the unborn from the abortionist's knife by supporting pro-life legislation and practices. Contact your congressman and senators and insist that they make ending abortion-on-demand a top priority in the new 113th Congress.

Also, please consider supporting pro-life ministries, like crisis pregnancy centers. The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention has the Psalm 139 Project that raises money to put ultrasound machines in crisis pregnancy centers. More than 90% of the mothers considering abortion who view their unborn babies on ultrasound decide against abortion.

I encourage you to visit Psalm 139 Project's website, [psalm139project.org](http://psalm139project.org), to learn more about this life-saving ministry.

A baby is aborted every 25 seconds in America. This is nothing to celebrate or accept. It should drive us to our knees in repentance and supplicating prayer for our nation. Let's join together to put an end to these anniversaries.

Let's start a new anniversary, one that commemorates the day the Lord brought *Roe v. Wade* to an end.

*Duke is vice president for public policy and research for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, and also serves as director of the Research Institute of the ERLC. He is also a regular contributor to the ERLC's For Faith and Family radio broadcast. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.*

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# Chinese social network being used by Christians

**LONDON (BP)** — Chinese Christians are sharing their faith on Weibo, China's giant state-regulated social network, and some are beginning to challenge censorship by speaking out against religious persecution, according to a report by World Watch Monitor (formerly Compass Direct News).

When the Christian band Rainbow Come appeared on China's equivalent of The X Factor, Christians turned to social networking to drum up votes for the band so their music could reach more Chinese, WWM recounts.

Within a few days, thousands of votes had been posted for Rainbow Come, according to China's Gospel Times, enough to propel them to a leading position in the seventh round of the show, Chinese Dream, on Zhejiang Television in early January.

Such is the power of social networking even in China, which has officially banned Facebook and Twitter. In the place of these established but unregulated sites, Chinese authorities have permitted Weibos, or microblogs.

From its inception in 2009, China's leading microblog company, Sina Weibo, now boasts 400 million users, and the number is rising. WWM reports, noting that rival companies also lay claim to hundreds of millions of subscribers.

According to the China Internet Network Information Centre, 40% of the population of China are now on the Internet, and most of these are microbloggers.

## Spreading the Word

Chinese Christians, too, are getting in on the act. Some are beginning to share their faith on Weibo, and a few are reaching substantial audiences. According to the website Christians in China, one of the leading faith bloggers is Pan Shiyi, a real estate billionaire who "frequently shares prayers on Sundays with his six million plus followers."

Christians in China claims "China's microblog has become the new frontier of China's Christian movement."

If so, WWM ponders, how far will China's cyber police permit Christians to stray from the official party line? China's Christians are starting to mobilize prayer and even discuss religious freedoms, but on the monitored and regulated Weibo. Would China's ever-watchful authorities allow Christians to rally support against religious persecution in their own land?

China still ranks among the top 50 worst persecutors of Christians in the annual World Watch List published by the Open Doors religious freedom watchdog group. WWM notes China is well aware that social media was used to powerful effect in mustering protest in the Arab Spring. Yet it permits these microblogs.

As with Twitter, Weibo postings are restricted to 140 characters. However, WWM notes that is less of a limitation in Chinese languages, in which 140 characters are equivalent to 70-80 words in English — enough to spark a debate or begin to tell a story.

Users also can post pictures and video clips to their Weibo pages, and from there they can link to the Chinese equivalent of

YouTube — Youku — where the band Rainbow Come can be seen performing.

An earlier indication of growing boldness among China's Christian community came in August, WWM reports, when a picture was posted on Weibo of a young man standing in a public square holding a placard with a Gospel message. Christians on Weibo praised him for his courage and commended him for the example he was setting.

Yet another Weibo blog displays a map giving the locations of churches across China, WWM reports. The east of the country is thick with them. Beside the map, the posting says: "Western missionaries ... through much suffering, gave their lives to irrigate this hard and rocky soil. Every Christian should think about this."

Some may see the posting as a veiled reference toward persecution today in China, WWM notes. According to Christians in China, the country has 14 million "registered" believers, whose churches come under the control of the atheist state. More than five times as many Christians, meanwhile, risk suspicion, surveillance and arrest by choosing to worship in unregistered, and therefore illegal, house churches.

## Persecution challenged

Norway-based religious liberty group Forum 18 notes that much of the discussion of persecution via Weibo is in a historical context or focuses on trouble overseas. In September, "an urgent call for prayer!" went out for Iranian pastor Yousef Nadarkhani who was under sentence of death for apostasy in Tehran.

That message was picked up and reposted extensively. Pastor Nadarkhani later was released.

There also have been postings about the lack of religious freedom in China specifically for Christians, WWM reports. In July, Shanghai's newly-ordained auxiliary bishop, Ma Daqin, resigned from his post in the state-approved Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association.

He stepped down immediately after his ordination, in a gesture described by the BBC "as a challenge to Chinese state control over Catholic churches and clergy."

The government responded by closing his Catholic seminary, to a flurry of protests on Weibo. Forum 18 highlighted one notable posting: "a regime that deprives a religious organisation of autonomy and attacks and divides religious workers ... is not qualified to say that the country under its rule has... religious freedom."

On Dec. 14, Bishop Ma was stripped of his title by the government, and he is believed to be under house arrest, WWM reports.

## Citizen journalism

Weibo shot to prominence as a forum for citizen journalism after a train crash in 2011 killed 40 and injured 200 in Zhejiang province, WWM recounts. The first news of the crash broke on Weibo, when passenger Yangguan Quanyang posted: "Our carriage has fallen onto its side. Children are screaming... Come to help us please! Come fast!"

According to China Daily, her plea for

help was reposted 100,000 times. By the following week, postings about the crash had multiplied to 30 million on Weibo and another of China's leading microblog sites.

It was footage on Weibo that exposed local officials trying literally to bury the evidence — by burying the actual train. It caused a furor.

Public anger boiled over when official directives attempting to gag and finesse reporting of the crash were posted online. The state-run Global Times described the local authorities' handling of the crash as a "public relations disaster" — a disaster that came to light because of a wave of outrage in Chinese social media.

The international news media picked up on this and other Weibo exposes. As the BBC has noted, "Weibo's ability to connect people has been used by campaigns to help street children, boycott polluting companies, even to ban the use of sharks fins in soup."

Some local authorities have embraced the phenomenon by engaging in debate and encouraging feedback from citizens, and China watchers believe Weibo is tolerated because it enables the central government to keep local corruption in check and provides a pressure-relief valve to vent public concern.

It also allows the state to listen in on its citizens; a useful surveillance tool to spot potential dissidents and nip serious protest in the bud. As Chinese-American freedom campaigner Martin Johnson pointed out: "The reason Weibo exists is because the Party allowed it."

## Weibo censorship

So, unsurprisingly, Weibo is subject to censorship, though with a lighter touch than the rest of the Chinese media, WWM states. According to the Greatfire.org website of Chinese-American freedom advocate Martin Johnson, authorities in China have blocked 1,700 Weibo search terms.

Prohibited words include Tiananmen, Tank man, revolution, uprising and 1989 — the year of the Tiananmen Square student protests.

Also verboten are the words Lama — as in the Dalai Lama — and Falun, as in the outlawed religious group Falun Gong, WWM reports. Messages containing politically sensitive phrases are removed either automatically, by filters, or by operatives reading and deleting by hand.

As well as words, some subjects also are forbidden, with WWM referencing "democracy and freedom" and any criticism of the Communist Party and its top leadership. A New York Times article exposing the "billions in hidden riches" acquired by the family of Premier Wen Jiabao was blocked, and every reference to the article on Weibo was assiduously removed.

A Harvard University study estimated that around 13% of blogs posted in China have been subject to censorship.

## One-child policy

WWM notes, however, that discussion has been permitted on a key area of public policy: China's one-child policy. Christians, concerned about the sanctity of human life, are being drawn into debate on the issue and some have gone further, becoming involved in active opposition to government policy.

According to USA Today, nearly a million postings flooded into Weibo after photos were put online showing a mother

who had been forced to have an abortion in Ankang City, Shaanxi Province. Feng Jianmei was pictured lying in a hospital bed beside the dead body of her aborted daughter, who had been killed by lethal injection after nearly eight months in the womb. Many of the Weibo postings were in protest of the one-child policy.

The story caught the attention of a Beijing-based Christian lawyer, Zhang Kai, who, along with other human rights lawyers, has faced harassment and intimidation for campaigning for religious freedom in China. He told USA Today, "I think governments shouldn't plan family planning, it's the citizen's right. God won't allow humans to be forced abortions, and he's unhappy to see it."

It's not hard to see why the abortion issue has struck a nerve on Weibo. According to Britain's Daily Telegraph, "young Chinese in particular have embraced the net with religious fervor." The Telegraph estimates half of China's Internet users are under 25, spending around 16.5 hours online every week.

The Shanghai Teenage Research Centre told the Telegraph that many young netizens turn to Weibo to replace the companionship of the brothers and sisters denied to them by China's strict one-child policy.

## Mobilization?

Could Christian activists use Weibo to mount a campaign for religious freedom in China, much as Twitter and Facebook were used to marshal protests during the Arab Spring?

One issue for Weibo users, WWM notes, is that they are being monitored — and they know it — although perhaps less effectively than the authorities might have wished. Although subscribers are forbidden from using aliases when applying for accounts, the largest microblogging company, Sina Weibo, admits it has not always complied with that regulation for fear of losing subscribers.

According to Forum 18, state censors can act within minutes to remove troublesome posts, but other than instances of cancelling users' accounts, Forum 18 has no record of sanctions being imposed on bloggers who cross the party line.

However, Martin Johnson of Greatfire.com told the Reuters news agency that the Communist Party permits social media only because it "thinks it can use Weibo to its advantage." Johnson, who founded Greatfire.org to press for Internet freedom, has launched his own microblogging site, Freeweibo.com, which aims to bypass government censorship.

Within a month of going live in October, the authorities tried to block that, too. Where there's a will, there's a way to get around the Great Firewall of China. That's by using Internet connections routed internationally. According to various U.S. reports, China now has 63.5 million Facebook users — an almost eightfold increase in just two years despite government bans — while users of Twitter have tripled since 2009.

Even these figures are mere drops in the ocean compared to the sea of Weibo users.

Forum 18's verdict on Weibo is that while it is "advancing religious freedom in China to some extent... it is not yet (if it ever will be) an effective means for people to mobilize to actively defend their rights to freedom of religion or belief. For now, Chinese Weibo users will have to be content... to express their religious or non-religious beliefs publicly — which would have been unthinkable in China not very long ago."



Decades ago there used to be at virtually every railroad crossing in our state a sign with two white panels that made an X. On those panels it said something like, Mississippi Law - Stop, Look, and Listen. As a child, I recall watching people who never stopped, looked, or listened. Since it said that it was the law, I wondered why people were not going to jail. I guess there were times when people got a ticket or something, but I never knew it. I also seemed to recall that there were times when our state would be found among the leaders of states that had wrecks occur at railroad crossings.

Times are different now and replacing those signs are cross arms that are supposed to come down and prevent you from going across the tracks when a train is coming. Some roads have been rerouted over and around the tracks where you will not have to stop. Still, all of us could learn a great deal from the message, stop, look and listen, that at one time was seen everywhere. Especially for those of us who know the Lord and want to walk in His ways and do His will, there should be purposeful times that we stop, look, and listen.

We rarely find a moment to stop in a busy world where we are always in a rush to get somewhere to do something or where we are pushed to get ready for something just ahead. Time and again the Lord encourages us to pause for reflective moments and a meeting time with Him. We need to stop with Him and get out of all of the push and tug that is taking place in life. The Psalmist said in that great twenty-third chapter, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me besides the still waters, he restoreth my soul." I have always been fascinated by that verb when He said, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." I can see the shepherd in a beautiful setting nudging his sheep and guiding them along to get to the pasture to rest, to stop, and to enjoy the green pastures.

Growing up in a family and having a personal vent toward working hard and giving my best, I have always struggled with simply taking the time to stop. Even the thought of doing such a thing creates resistance in my heart because anything akin to laziness is something that my spirit fiercely pushes back against. In the midst of an intense time in the life and ministry of Jesus and His disciples, I recall that He said to them, "Come apart." He knew that they needed to stop.

The great old preacher of generations ago, Vance Havner, made the observation that Jesus told His disciples to come apart because if they did not, they would come apart. God made us to work, exercise, achieve, apply ourselves, give our best, and at times, to stop. It is

one of the reasons that He gave us one day out of seven on a cyclical basis so that we would stop the daily routine and take on a new perspective. The Sabbath Day initiated by God and codified into the Ten Commandments was a day to stop and experience new reflections of life, deeper understandings of His will, and a reordering of our intentions and relationships to get us ready to face the challenges of the new week. Many of us pray and seek the Lord wanting Him to direct our steps, to give us a clear understanding of His plan and purpose for our lives, and to lead us as we journey through day after day and week after week. He will order our steps, but He will also order our stops.

The second word that used to be on the crossing signs was look. Of course, at a train crossing it is pointing to the fact that there may be a train coming down the track, and you do not want to tangle with it. It is certainly an expression of wisdom for each one of us to look and to recognize that sometimes the direction that we are going or the harmful things that are coming toward us can be destructive, derailing, and absolutely need avoiding. Sometimes too many of us are like kids who are learning to play baseball and are in the developmental stage of having a ball thrown toward them when they are hitting. Some kids quickly develop a habit that when the ball is thrown toward the plate they close their eyes

before they swing. That is not a good habit. It is certainly not wise to go through life with all of the influences and dangers that are around us not to keep an open eye to watch for those things that could run over us.

It probably is important that not only do we look as we travel through this world, but we may even need our heads on a swivel so that we can look quickly in every direction all of the time because there is so much that can harm us. There are so many things that could crash and crush our family, injure our children, or do untold damage to our churches. These are not easy days for the child of God to navigate through the places, issues, and obstacles that are around us. We need to be wide-eyed and alert.

The last word was listen. At the train crossing, you should stop, look, and listen or you may not pick up on the alert. If you listen, you might be able to hear the train off in the distance blowing its whistle. Suddenly, you realize that you need to take some kind of action. One of the wonderful things that God does for us is that He speaks to us. He speaks to us through His word and He comes and leads us by the presence of His Holy Spirit. We need to listen.

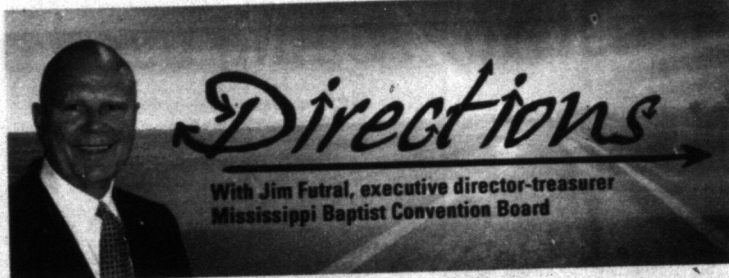
Recently, I was in a home where they had several televisions. All of them were on and tuned to various stations. Somebody asked them if they left all of their televi-

sions on all of the time. They responded, "I think so. We do not watch television all of the time, but it is just background noise in our house." I feel sometimes as though I get so used to hearing the things of God and even hearing the proclamation of God's Word at church and other settings that it just becomes background noise rather than a clarion call to pay attention to what God is saying. We are not told, but I have often wondered how many times out there on the back side of the desert God tried to get Moses' attention, to speak to his heart, and to lead him to the task that

He had for him. Maybe it was to no avail, but God has a way of getting our attention, making us sit up tall, open our ears, listen, and pay attention to what He has to say to us.

I suppose that a burning bush would do that for most of us, but I also know that circumstances in our lives can be so critical that we have nowhere to turn but to Him and we listen. Sometimes it is because of an accident. Other times it is because of a death, health issue, or a loss of a relationship or job. Storms, floods, things that fall out of the sky and stuff that goes bump in the night have a way of focusing our total attention on God. Listen and pay attention to what He is saying. In this case, I would encourage you to join with me not just to have these signs erected again at railroad crossings in Mississippi but for every one of us to have one of those signs planted strategically in the center of our lives so that day by day from one occasion to another we would stop, look, and listen. Speak Lord for your servant heareth!

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## Stop, Look, and Listen

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FULL-TIME PASTOR, FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH, STURGIS, MS. The church is located in Southeast Oktibeha County, the home of Starkville and Mississippi State University. Resumes and nominations may be sent to [brown@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:brown@ext.msstate.edu) or to Friendship Baptist Church, 5491 Craig Springs Road, Sturgis, MS 39769, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

PINE GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL "ASSOCIATE PASTOR/YOUTH MINISTER". Please send resume to Pine Grove Baptist Church, 124 Gather Johnson Rd., Magee, MS 39111.

NORTHCREST BAPTIST CHURCH IN MERIDIAN, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITION: FULL TIME YOUTH PASTOR. Responsibilities include leading students grades 7-12. Please send resumes to: [jobs@northcrestbaptist.com](mailto:jobs@northcrestbaptist.com)

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, NATCHEZ, MS. IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please mail resumes to: Immanuel Baptist Church 684 Hwy 61 North Natchez, Ms. 39120 Attn: Pastor Search Committee

HEBRON BAPTIST CHURCH IN MERIDIAN, MS, IS LOOKING FOR A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY. Will be responsible for Sunday morning and evening worship. If interested, please email a resume to [hebronbaptist@bellsouth.net](mailto:hebronbaptist@bellsouth.net) or mail to Music Search Committee, 4795 Virville Causeway Rd, Meridian, MS, 39301.



What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

# HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

January 24, 2013

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

Pray this day for...

January 25 – February 7, 2013

*"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*  
— Ephesians 6:18

Pray for: **Stephen\* & Svetlana Parish**, missionaries to European Peoples in the U.S. through strategy coordination and church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Kevin\* & Brenda Peacock**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Canada through theological education, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Sarah\* & John Perkins**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in France through mission support, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Sarah\* & Michael Prewitt**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Portugal through church planting, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **John\* & Amy Purl**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Bulgaria through volunteer coordination, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Asbury & Jeannie\* Martin**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Argentina through church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Robert\* & Janice Mooney**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Latvia through strategy coordination, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Linda\* & Mike Ray**, missionaries to European Peoples in the Ukraine through strategy coordination, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Nicolee\* & Steven\* Roberts**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the U.S. through church planting and church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Marty\* & Mary\* Roberts**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in the U.S. through strategy coordination, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Ruth\* & Steven\* Robertson**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the U.S. through financial administration, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Burton\* & Margaret Schmitz**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Senegal through church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Eugenia\* & Tracy Putnam**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Russia through theological education, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Annette\* & Michael\* Racey**, missionaries to American Peoples in the U.S. through church/home outreach and evangelism.

\*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.

## Church Building Conference/LifeWay Church Architecture

March 19, 2013  
Skyroom, MBCB Baptist Building  
8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

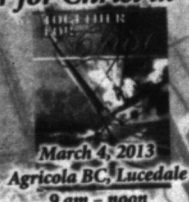
Provide key leaders with quality church facility information. Registration requested. Please contact the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept., 1-800-748-1651, ext. 305, 601-292-3305 or [cwtaylor@mbcb.org](mailto:cwtaylor@mbcb.org).

## PASTORS & WORSHIP LEADERS WORKSHOP

"Together for Christ in Worship"



Alan Woodward



Slater Murphy

Led by Alan Woodward, director of the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept., and Slater Murphy, director of the Church Music Dept., MBCB. Registration requested. Please contact the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept., 1-800-748-1651, ext. 305, 601-292-3305 or [cwtaylor@mbcb.org](mailto:cwtaylor@mbcb.org).

## 9th Annual SENIOR EVANGELISM RALLY

Tuesday, January 29, 2013  
First Baptist Church, Richland  
(601) 939-1715

For more information contact Debbie Brashier in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department at:  
1-800-748-1651, ext. 284  
601-292-3284  
or [dbrashier@mbcb.org](mailto:dbrashier@mbcb.org)



	Comp. Programs	Other	Total
ADAMS	2,569.85	6,061.84	8,631.69
CANNARY	12,143.47	12,542.33	24,685.80
CLIFF TRIPLE	1,674.00	999.00	2,673.00
CLARET	17,969.54	2,161.32	20,130.86
RIC NACHEZ	29,480.24	21,661.32	51,141.56
CLAYTON	5,938.06	7,000.00	12,938.06
IMMANUEL	12,745.25	12,745.25	25,490.50
MORICATOWN	66,267.02	9,940.00	76,207.02
WILSON	5,126.40	1,361.60	6,488.00
STARBUCKS	16,677.20	16,677.20	33,354.40
STANLEY	12,921.00	11,711.54	24,632.54

[illegible]

	200,580.70	290,615.22	600,195.92
FRANKLIN			
BURLING	605.78	100.00	905.78
CONCORD	2,344.08	2,875.00	5,219.08
CONCORD	2,344.17	2,875.00	5,219.17
EDUCATION	2,737.00	7,151.00	9,888.00
ELI BLOCK	10,444.80	6,151.00	16,595.80
HARRIS	9,929.58	7,151.00	17,080.58
HOPWELL	4,144.67	1,151.00	5,295.67
LUCAS	2,079.00	1,650.00	3,729.00
MICAL CREEK	22,016.78	10,962.88	32,979.66
MEADOWS			
MIJON	1,639.14	501.00	2,140.14
NEW CASTLE	1,200.00	2,012.00	3,212.00
NEW SALEM	1,200.00	2,012.00	3,212.00
OTZ	153.78	838.96	992.74
PLEASANT VALLEY	6,223.95	5,108.66	11,332.61
PROVIDENCE	6,223.95	5,108.66	11,332.61
RAMAH			
ROSE	11,825.80	3,630.95	15,456.75
SABIEPA	7,061.15	5,219.54	12,280.69
SILVER	4,000.00	2,219.54	6,219.54
SUNSHINE	700.68		700.68
UNION	200.00		200.00
TOTAL	107,208.15	57,535.16	164,743.31

<b>HOLMES</b>			
ANTIOCH	701.66	1,669.47	2,371.13
BILUAH	4,027.86	3,478.53	7,506.39
CHURCH	748.21	734.94	1,483.15
CRUCIF	5,181.37	6,127.10	11,308.47
DEARBORN	2,227.00	2,023.00	4,250.00
HC DURANT	8,017.12	8,053.40	17,070.52
HC LINDSEY	26,045.22	23,424.00	49,469.22
HOUSTON	6,020.00	5,314.96	11,334.96
MARSHALL	5,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00
MARTIN STREET	8,111.77	10,000.00	18,111.77
MCCOY	3,205.00	4,847.10	8,052.10
MY VISION	333.84	333.84	667.68
NEW YORK	11,000.00	10,000.00	21,000.00
OREGON MEMORIAL	1,550.00	1,065.00	2,615.00
PODINS	2,495.56	465.00	2,960.56
PLANT RIDGE	2,000.00	2,000.00	4,000.00
WYATT	4,091.92	3,728.48	7,820.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67,811.92</b>	<b>48,571.89</b>	<b>117,463.81</b>
<b>HUMPHREYS</b>			
BILUAH	12,945.93	8,328.06	21,274.00
CALGARY	804.63	719.76	1,524.39
CASPER	21,600.00	17,840.00	39,440.00
CHURCH	24,262.42	21,718.40	45,980.82
HC BOKA	3,171.40	2,220.29	5,391.69
HC LOUISE	1,990.81	1,990.81	3,981.62

[illegible]











## The 2013 Legislature Tees It Up

In sports lingo "Tee It Up" means get your game face on and let the game begin. Politics is a lot like a game of golf. In golf some think the only thing to worry about is how your opponent (Democrat vs. Republican) is doing. Real golfers know you can never forget about the terrain—the sand traps, the water hazards, the rough, and the out-of-bounds markers. Golfers must also consider climate conditions such as temperature, wind, and rain. It all affects your scorecard at the end of the day.

The general public fails to recognize that in politics, as in a game of golf, it is never as easy as it seems—to always be in the fairway, to make par, or a birdie or two along the way. The truth is that enacting legislation is never easy. Yet once again, our elected officials are on the tee box, loosening up, and about to take a full swing at this year's agenda. Here are a few pieces of legislation we at the Christian Action Commission will be watching closely.

Schools and school safety will be major topics this year.

Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves plans to have the Senate introduce at least two measures that relate to school safety. The first is to establish a \$7.5 million grant program at the Ms. Dept. of Education that will help fund a certified law enforcement officer at all public schools.

The second measure is to pass legislation that requires Mississippi courts to report findings of mental incompetence, institutional commitment and pleadings or judgments to crimes based on insanity to the FBI's Criminal Background Check System. This will help curtail the selling of guns to the mentally ill. Hopefully, our Lt. Gov. can get it done.

Charter schools will be hotly debated. The old adage "if it ain't broke don't fix it" applies here. Our schools have been broken for years so something must be done. It is time we move beyond territorialism,

job security, and greed and focus on KIDS getting a quality education. My opinion is that those who oppose change neglect the most important equation in this argument—educating children. Protecting status quo has kept us on the bottom in education for years. Mississippi must do better.



with Jimmy Porter

The Mississippi Religious Liberties Student Act will once again be introduced. Senators McDaniel and Sojourner along with many others have been active in this process. This bill guarantees students the right to express religious convictions in the classroom, papers, speeches, etc. Religious clubs will have the same privileges as other clubs. Even though this legislation does not accomplish all we want, it is a positive step in the right direction. The CAC asks you to urge your elected officials to pass it.

Last year Mississippi passed the Child Protection

Act, and this year we will ask the legislature to strengthen it. As it now stands, this act makes it mandatory to save DNA from any aborted fetus of a minor. By expanding this law to include all births by minors we can prosecute and help stop those who violate MS statutory rape laws and impregnate our Mississippi children.

Bills such as Women's Health Defense Act along with a Heartbeat Bill will strengthen current prolife bills. The Heartbeat Bill will protect life by preventing abortions after a detectable heartbeat. It does not disallow abortion but it does reduce the window of time in which an abortion can be performed legally.

A Smokefree Mississippi bill will be introduced as it has in the past. This one bill has as much organizational and public support of any I have ever seen to be turned away by the legislature year after year. Encourage your senator and representative to pass this measure—it is your health and tax dollars that suffer if your legislator fails to pass this legislation.

There is one big ole elephant in the room at the Capitol—Expanded Medicaid. Expanded Medicaid is one of the tenets of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed in 2010. I believe this act will greatly affect legislation this year because it will be the issue that is bitterly debated and divisive. There are good and honest people on both sides of the issue. Most would like to see it done, but trusting the federal government and not knowing the price tag ten years from now seem to be insurmountable obstacles. If our legislators get so divided over this one, it possibly could have a negative impact on several good bills. Stay tuned.

Things are just getting started. Go to our website [www.christianaction.com](http://www.christianaction.com) and we will try to keep you informed as much as possible about the things we are monitoring. You have asked these legislators to come to Jackson and serve so now pray for them every single day. Hopefully, with our prayers they can stay out of the rough and in the fairways!!!!

Porter serves as executive director-treasurer for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. He can be contacted at 601-292-3332 or [jporter@christianaction.com](mailto:jporter@christianaction.com).

### SEND NORTH AMERICA CHURCH GROWTH AND REVITALIZATION CONFERENCE

February 7, 2013 Madison, MS

Nearly 72% of Southern Baptist churches in North America

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with Johnny Hunt

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# THE VILLAGE VIEW



**Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director**

P.O. Box 27  
Clinton, MS 39060-0027  
(601) 922-2242

[www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com)

## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

**NOVEMBER 16-  
DECEMBER 5, 2012**

### MEMORIALS

Mr. & Mrs. Lailon Dorsey  
Jerusalem BC  
Charles Duncan  
Jane Davis  
Mary Alice Duncan  
Charles W. Holmes  
C. N. Egger, Jr.  
Mrs. C. N. Egger  
Joe Elmore  
John Dell Hucabee  
Bettie Gail Meek  
Nancy Shows  
Sarah Esagro  
Sue Germany  
M. O. Estes  
East Louisville BC  
Mrs. Bessie Ezell  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Brown  
Bobby Ray Fairley  
Mrs. Christine Fairley  
McRee  
Robert Joel Fairley  
Mrs. Christine Fairley  
McRee  
Mrs. Lurline Flye  
Linda & Ray Campbell  
Mrs. Ann Forbes  
Mary Hartford  
Myra Boone Family  
Raymond Freeman  
Mr. & Mrs. Joe T. Crawford  
Wallace & Helen Johnson  
Jerry Fry  
Buddy & Linda Meyer

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Ahrens  
Mr. John Gandy  
Margueritte Gandy SSC  
Mr. & Mrs. Billy G. Williams  
Mother of Lil Gant  
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Stanford  
Mr. Dock Graham  
William B. Webb  
Mrs. Mary Gross  
Clay & Paula Caston  
Mrs. Martha Hammack  
Ladies II SSC,  
Woolmarket BC  
Marjorie Harrell  
W. C. Coaten Family  
Joell Harris  
Rusty & Kathy Sykes  
Mr. Raymond Noah Harris  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmie Mitchell  
Ed & Pat Smith  
Eva Graham  
Paul & Lavenia Bullard  
Shelia Joiner  
Katherine Henry  
Charles W. Holmes  
Elaine Herring  
Mr. W. B. Herring  
Frank Herring  
Tom & Bettye Coward  
Scott Humphreys  
Glynn & Jean Jones  
Grace Jackson  
Mrs. Alice Pinkerton  
Angie Haddock  
Faye Bennett  
Patrick James  
John Dell Hucabee

Bettie Gail Meek  
Nancy Shows  
Jan Jayroe  
Sara Chilton  
Rev. M. C. Johnson  
Mr. & Mrs. Terry Champion  
Sammy Johnson  
Valley Park BC  
Mary Elizabeth Jones  
Warren & Becky Strickland  
Rev. Robert Jones  
Glynn & Jean Jones  
Meridith Lee  
Billy & Shirley Hastings  
Mrs. Bettye Lenoir  
Jimmy & Jo Jenkins  
Tim Loveless  
Nadine Loveless  
Ms. Betty P. Magee  
Sarah Barbare  
Terry Magee  
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Stanford  
Mrs. Cheryl Marchant  
Jerry & Rose Ann Ivey  
Edress May  
Kenneth C. Allen  
Wendell McDowell  
Jane Davis  
Lurlene G. McGraw  
Mrs. Richard M. Nowell & Family  
Lorene McMahan  
Stanton BC  
Doris Lois McRee  
Mr. Raymond McRee  
Mrs. Rosa Mae Miller  
Robert & Glynn Smith  
Deer Creek BC  
Mrs. Ruth Mills  
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Cleveland  
Annie Mae Morgan  
Charlotte Vickers  
Mrs. Billie Morgan  
Jerry & Rose Ann Ivey  
Mr. Gary Myrick  
Jimmy & Jo Jenkins  
Rev. Hoyte Nelson  
Joyce Hall  
Barbara Oberhausen  
Mr. & Mrs. M. P. Busby  
Jerry Odom  
Rusty & Kathy Sykes  
Jesse Elmer Oswalt, Jr.  
Alton & Ruth Brewer  
Charles Patterson  
Mr. & Mrs. James T. Garrett  
Evelyn "Big Momma" Patterson  
Mr. & Mrs. Jesse Johnson  
Harry Neal  
Weezie Corder  
Martha Peacock  
Shelia Huffman  
Mrs. Rebecca Pettit  
Jerry & Rose Ann Ivey  
Nell Phillips  
Doug & Mary Sue Hutton  
James C. Pogue  
MS Assn of Coaches  
Beverly Poole  
John Dell Hucabee  
Bettie Gail Meek  
Nancy Shows  
Ed Prince  
Valley Park BC  
Gerald Prince  
Valley Park BC  
Alice Rainer  
Ray & Peggy Cothran

Jimmy Ritchey  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Breakfield  
W. E. "Sonny" Roark  
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Stanford  
Mr. Joe Scoggin  
Jimmy & Jo Jenkins  
Danny Shows  
Buddy & Lisa Meyer  
Hazel Jean Simpson  
Gerald & Betty Wigington  
Bonnie Shepard  
Pleasant Hill BC  
Chris & Sandra Federick  
Garry Slocum  
Jane Smith  
Mr. & Mrs. Claude Smith  
Linda Campbell  
Violet Smith  
John Dell Hucabee  
Bettie Gail Meek  
Nancy Shows  
Paul Storey  
Mr. & Mrs. R. N. Humphrey  
Mrs. Verda Stringer  
Mr. & Mrs. Kent Weatherford  
Dick Taylor  
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Stanford  
Doris Thomas  
Mary Upchurch  
Paul Tisdale  
John Dell Hucabee  
Bettie Gail Meek  
Nancy Shows  
Mrs. Ruth Wansley  
Jimmy & Jo Jenkins  
Mr. Norris Ward  
Faith & Hope SSC,  
FBC Louisville  
Ann Watts  
Pauline Sinopoli  
Nott Wheeler  
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald

Stanford  
Mrs. Kathy Salley Wood  
Carolyn Pogue  
James L. Wooley  
Mt. Pleasant BC

Madre Yarber  
Dora Patterson  
Pete Young  
Ad. Men SSC 5, FBC  
McComb



Thank you to the Hazlehurst Lion's Club for inviting Celeste Cade, BCV Public Relations Associate, to share about The Baptist Children's Village ministry at their January meeting.

## BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at [ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com](mailto:ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com) or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at [www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com).



# Court is in Session • Amos 5: 4-6; 18-24; 6:1a; 4-7

In my years as a Student Minister I loved to talk to students about why they attended our youth activities. The most common answer was that they were there because it was the place where the most exciting thing was happening at that time. I often wonder why people attend church. It seems that many adults equate their spiritual life with their attendance at worship or other religious activities. Many choose to attend only for what is in it for them. They seem to adhere to the philosophy that "It's all about me." In our study of Amos it is clear that God has set a different standard for our participation in following Him. Neither religious activity nor self-focused worship measures up to God's standard. Those who know God, love Him, and have a growing relationship with Him will consistently demonstrate their faith by living by God's standards and by treating their fellow man justly. Our lesson today will help us look at ways people substitute selfish living for Godly conduct, and how we please God by living just lives.

## Looking for Life in the Wrong Places? (Amos 5: 4-6)

As Amos begins chapter five, he brings God's message in the form of a lament or funeral dirge. The tone is very somber as he conveys the message of the impending fall

of the nation of Israel. Woven into this message of doom is also a call for God's people to "Seek Me and Live!" (Amos 5: 4 HCSB) God warns the people not to seek consolation from any other place. While the places of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beer-sheba were once true places of worship, the people had built

false idols in these places and used them as substitutes for worshipping Yahweh, the one true God. God is urging His people

to seek His presence in their lives through sincere worship and by living a holy life. Many people seek answers in many places or things, but only in knowing God will we find a full and meaningful life.

## Longing for a Rescue Day? (Amos 5: 18-20)

Even in our world there is a sense in which we all seek a day when things will turn in our favor. It was the same in the day of Amos. Israel was God's chosen people,

and they longed for that day just like we do. God's message to them must have been very upsetting. The "day of the Lord" (V.18) they longed for would not be a day when God would set everything right in their favor but a day of judgment for their sinful living. How can God's people think that they can

live however they want and not expect discipline from their Heavenly Father? God was not pleased with how they were

living and "the Day of the Lord" would not be what they expected.

## Substituting Rites for Right Living? (Amos 5: 21-24)

It must have been quite a shock to the people when they heard from Amos that God hated, despised, and couldn't stand the stench of their solemn assemblies. (v. 21) Using modern day language, what God was saying may have sounded like this: "I hate, I despise your Sunday Schools, and so-called

worship services. I am tired of listening to your sermons and I can't bear to look on your fellowships!" (Adult Commentary p. 95) Our world's response to this prophetic word usually is the same as the Israelites' response; they wanted to get rid of the messenger. In cases where we cannot get rid of the messenger, we have watered down the message of God to a point we are 'comfortable.' We go through the act of worship without truly worshipping. The Israelites had the form of worship but proved they were not worshipping by how they lived their lives. No form of worship will ever substitute for how we unjustly treat each other and ignore God's statutes.

## Caring about Self but not Others? (Amos 6: 1a, 4-7)

There were many people in Amos's day that were trusting in their personal achievements and which side of the tracks they lived on to sustain them. They had ignored the plight of the people and of the nation as a whole. God warned them they were going into exile first. In what or whom are we placing our trust? True security can only be found in trusting in God.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education/Outreach at Brandon Church, Brandon.

# Haggai: A Message of Hope • Haggai 1-2

Most of the nation of Judah had returned to the land of Canaan after their exile to Babylon. The nation of Persia had conquered Babylon during the exile. In 539 BC, King Cyrus of Persia gave permission for the people of God to return to their homeland and rebuild their worship center, their homes and their lives.

Several groups returned to Jerusalem at separate times. Their first priority was to rebuild the temple of Solomon which had been destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC. In 538 BC, they laid the foundation for the temple with great joy and anticipation. Then, for no apparent reason, they took an unapproved sabbatical from their labors. God was not pleased. Haggai and Zechariah were dispatched as the God-appointed prophetic foremen who would bring the people to full attention and the temple building project to full completion.

The governor of Judah was Zerubbabel, listed as an ancestor in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew One. I call him Z-rubble-man. The High Priest was named Joshua. They had done their job, escorting groups of people back into the land from Babylon. They succeeded in their supervision of the temple foundation project. They also obtained the building materials needed to complete the job. Sadly, they dropped the leadership ball, allowing the work to remain unfinished for almost twenty years. Enter

Haggai and Zechariah, answering the call of the General Contractor.

Priority-setting is a wonderful tool for reaching goals and getting things done. Inverted priorities will run you straight into a ditch, every time. Ask Joshua and Z-rubble-man. God called Haggai and gave him a message

for these two leaders. Worship must be your top priority. Consider your ways. You have failed to rebuild the House of the Lord because you have neglected The Lord of the House. What an indictment!

Haggai began preaching around Labor Day of 520 BC. He concluded his prophetic work around Christmas time that same year. Joshua and Z-rubble-man attended a whole fall semester of temple building school with four months of specialized training. King Cyrus of Persia was dead. His son had reigned in his place. The third King of Persia was named Darius. Haggai prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius.

Enemies from Samaria to the north were relentless. The people determined to build homes for their families. Soon, the temple building project was cooling on the back burner. It got easier and easier for the people to become involved in crop planting and business building and family rearing.

Then, one year, they planted and there was no rain and no harvest. Soon they faced full-blown famine. Haggai queried, "Well, folks,

how's that disobedience working out for you?" They had dropped...the CALL. God sent Mister Feast (the meaning of the name "Haggai") to end their physical AND spiritual famine.

On the first day of the sixth month, Haggai preached a ten verse sermon. Their response was reverence and contrition toward God, the Original Architect. On the 24th day of that same month, the temple project began again in earnest. Haggai was filled with short sermons. Thank goodness, the response of the hearers was long obedience. On the 21st day of the seventh

month and the 24th day of the ninth month, they needed a pep talk. Haggai arrived with another word from the Lord which I have paraphrased below and entitled, "Alphabet Soup."

"ALL of you take courage BECAUSE the Lord is with you! COVENANT God never changes! DO not fear, His Spirit is here! At His word, EARTH, heaven, sea and land will one day shake again. FORMER house or latter house, the GLORY of the house belongs to the HOST of the house, not to you. IF you will seek holiness and truth, JUSTICE and peace will reign. KEEP in mind the tough times LEST you forget that the MILDEW, hail and wind NEVER appeared until you failed to OBEY. PROSPERITY and blessings are QUALITIES of those who follow God. READY to listen? SEED still in the barn? Yes. TREES producing figs, pomegranates and olives yet? UHHHMM...nope. However, you are walking in the VICTORY of faith once again. WHAT would you say if I told you that "X" marks this day on the calendar? YESSIREE, from this day on, God will bless you. ZERUBBABEL will be the signet ring seal of My approval."

Four years later, the temple was completed.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

## Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



## PRAYER

cont. from p. 1

Commission, founded in 1963, is the public policy agency of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention has assigned the Commission two tasks. The first is

to provide aids, materials, and services to churches so they may be informed of facts, trends, and conditions relating to the moral, social, and ethical issues that impact their lives.

Secondly, the Commission is to emphasize the biblical teachings as they relate to the seven areas of assigned concerns:

- The Family.
- Alcohol and Drugs.
- Pornography.

- Human Relations.
- Christian Citizenship.
- Church and State.
- Moral and Social Problems.

For more information on the work of the CAC, Porter can be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. E-mail: jporter@mbcb.org. Web site: www.christianaction.org.

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## Just for the Record



The sanctuary choir, children's choir (shown), and selected readers of **SLAYDEN CHURCH, MARSHALL ASSOCIATION**, presented A Festival of Lessons and Carols Dec. 2. Greg Long, interim minister of music; Rusty Fair, pastor.

### In other Church News:

► **Neshoba Church, Union**, will host the Singing Echoes Feb. 2, 7 p.m. The group will speak at the Brotherhood breakfast Feb. 3, 8 a.m. and will lead in the morning worship service. For more information, call (601) 527-2565.

► **Escatawpa Church, Moss Point**, will host the Hoppers in concert Feb. 22, 7 p.m.

► **Longview Church, Starkville**, exceeded its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$1,500 by giving \$2,658. To celebrate this achievement, the church has invited the MSU BSU Praise Team to conduct the Jan. 27 morning worship service at 11 with music and testimonies.

## Bivocational Ministry



Bivocational pastor Oscar Geeslin and his wife, Inez, are recognized for service to **MEADOW BROOK CHURCH IN OLIVE BRANCH**. In 1984 the church had 16 members present; current attendance numbers 220. The church has completed a worship center debt free and gives 12% to the Cooperative Program. Shown are Inez Geeslin, Geeslin, Dale Holloway, P.J. Scott, and Betty Scott.

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name. (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Shiloh Church, Big Creek**: Gospel singing and revival, Feb. 10 - 12; Sun., The Trailsmen Quartet, 10 a.m.; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Tues., 7 p.m.; Clarence Cooper, speaker; J.D. Long, music.

## BIBL i O C I P H E R

BSDE ZBAM, U QS ZBDZ MODIIUO XL

ZBS TSSPQ, SRST ZU JDHS ZBS LUUE

UV ZBS IDTP ZU VDAI.

DJUM SACBZ: VUXE

Clue: Z = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Joel Two: Six

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.